

VZCZCXRO5521
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHWR #2395/01 3531036
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 191036Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5660
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 2735
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 WARSAW 002395

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [PL](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: POLAND'S PRACTICAL APPROACH TO RECONCILIATION WITH
RUSSIA

REF: A. MOSCOW 05761
[1](#)B. WARSAW 02369

Classified By: DCM Kenneth M. Hillas for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: For practical reasons, the new Polish government is committed to improving relations with Russia (ref A) without abandoning core principles on democracy and energy security. Prime Minister Donald Tusk's decision to stop opposing Russian OECD membership was the first in a series of gestures that culminated in Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski's announcement of "a new chapter" in Polish-Russian relations - to include long-delayed ministerial level visits and Missile Defense consultations. Along the way, Poland's President Lech Kaczynski has made clear his disagreements with the PM over Russia policy - but these have more to do with style than substance. For now, both the President and the PM await official Russian action to lift the ban on Polish food imports (ref B) before reciprocating by dropping Polish opposition to an EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). This reciprocity lies at the heart of Poland's new approach to relations with Russia. END SUMMARY.

Steps Toward Rapprochement

[1](#)2. (C) On November 27, just days after coming to office, PM Tusk announced that his government wanted more dynamic and open relations with Russia. He launched the new effort by reversing his predecessor's tough stance and announcing that Poland would no longer block Russia's bid to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This opened the door for Russia to lift a two-year old ban on fresh meat imports from Poland (ref B). In response, on December 12 Polish Minister of Agriculture Marek Sawicki and his Russian counterpart Aleksey Gordeyev announced in Moscow that the Russian ban would be lifted following the signature by Polish and Russian veterinary authorities of a bilateral food safety agreement in Kaliningrad during the week of December 17. However, the Russian embargo on Polish poultry and selected plant products remains in place for the time being.

[1](#)3. (C) Tusk offered more reconciliation with his comments on the results of the Russian Duma elections of December 2, at first seeming to be courting Moscow by downplaying international concerns over the validity of those elections: "We don't know the official results, ...but it is beyond question that 'United Russia' has turned out to be the winner. We are concerned with signals that not everywhere the elections were conducted according to the standards of democracy as we understand it."

[1](#)4. (U) Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski continued the PM's theme by announcing the "opening of a new chapter" in

Polish-Russian relations after meeting with Russian FM Sergey Lavrov in Brussels on December 7 - the first bilateral of this type since November 2006. Sikorski described it as a "friendly" conversation and noted that the two FMs had determined that "Polish-Russian relations will no longer be a taboo subject." He reported that from "the mouth of Lavrov came the declaration that Russia treats Poland as an important and normal member of the EU." Sikorski cited signs of a thaw, including: an invitation from Moscow for PM Tusk to visit Russia in February 2008 (no such visits having taken place since January 2005); Lavrov's invitation to Sikorski to do the same; the resurrection of the Polish-Russian bilateral commission, with former FM Adam Rotfeld as the Polish co-chair. Sikorski and Lavrov also determined to hold Polish-Russian ongoing consultations on consular services and Missile Defense. Deputy FM Kislyak is scheduled to travel to Warsaw on 8 or 9 January with a team of experts for the first round of MD consultations, at which time he would offer the Russian policy perspective as well as its technical analysis of U.S. MD proposals.

Ractions

15. (C) After facing public criticism both domestically and internationally that he was acquiescing to Russian President Vladimir Putin's undemocratic approach, Tusk hardened his stance, while still trying to avoid confrontation with Moscow. On Russian elections, Tusk said at a December 4 press conference in Brussels that he was "skeptical and critical" about the "organization" of the ballot, but did not question the final results. Tusk also fired a volley, but not a barrage, in response to Russian General Yuri

WARSAW 00002395 002 OF 003

Baluyevskiy's December 15 declaration that an MD site in Poland would destabilize the continent, and that any interceptor launch from Poland would trigger an automated response from the Russian strategic nuclear weapons system. Tusk labeled Baluyevskiy's remarks "unacceptable," and FM Sikorski helped to defuse the tension by noting that Baluyevskiy had always been a hardliner on MD and "had already used strong language in the past."

16. (C) President Lech Kaczynski (whose twin brother Jaroslaw was PM in the previous government) expressed amazement over Tusk's decision to drop opposition to Russia's OECD bid and complained that no one had consulted him. Presidential Chancellery head (and former FM) Anna Fotyga echoed the President's complaint, stating that the change of policy on Russia's OECD bid signaled that Poland was ready to subordinate democratic ideals to big business and had forgotten about countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and the Baltics who suffered from Russian intimidation. She rhetorically asked if Poland was "selling Georgia" in order to end Moscow's ban on Polish beef. Despite this public clash, however, President Kaczynski has made no effort to block or change the substance of Tusk's new initiative. Fotyga declared that the Presidential Palace was not an alternative foreign policy center, but rather a crucial element of the nation's foreign policy process, and should have been consulted.

17. (C) Shortly after this public dispute, the MFA Eastern Policy Director Wojciech Zajackowski told us that he saw a difference more in style than in substance in the new approach to Russia. "Basically, there is no difference between the President and the Government" on Russia policy, although there are variations in "presentation." He warned that, "There is no sense in overemphasizing the difference between the President and the Prime Minister. Both understand it is impossible to conduct separate foreign policy." (COMMENT: Zajackowski seems to have the confidence of both President and PM, having accompanied Kaczynski on his December 6-7 trip to Ukraine only a day after participating

in Tusk's December 4 visit to Brussels. END COMMENT)

Wary Rapprochement

18. (C) Poland's new approach does not signal a new found trust in Moscow, but rather a practical effort to reduce conflict. During December 12 Missile Defense consultations with Acting U/S Rood, Sikorski described the basis of Poland's rapprochement: "We have enough problems with Russia already - we don't need to create more." Sikorski added, however that, "I don't have to prove my anti-Russian credentials here in Poland, but there is no point in poking them in the eye. We are done with 'honor games' here in Warsaw. We'll leave those to the Russians."

19. (C) This reciprocal approach to Russia also surfaced in Zajackowski description of Poland's approach to the Russian meat ban: "A positive resolution to the meat embargo is a precondition; it is the main obstacle in our relationship." Zajackowski said that Russian diplomats had told him the meat embargo was a failed policy and Moscow was just looking for a face-saving exit from the current impasse. The change of government in Warsaw had provided that opportunity, and Zajackowski expected a resolution to the issue before the new year. Zajackowski speculated that the ban had in fact been Moscow's attempt to see how far the EU would wade into bilateral affairs. He added that, in exchange for Moscow lifting the ban on Polish meat, Poland would drop its veto of the mandate for a new Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). In remarks to the press on December 14, PM Tusk clarified that Poland would drop the veto only if and when Russia ended "all" remaining restrictions on food imports from Poland - not just those on fresh pork and beef.

110. (C) This is a cautious rapprochement, however, as Poland understands that its continued focus on democracy promotion in former Soviet states will be a source of tension in the relationship. This friction first surfaced in 2004 when then President Aleksander Kwasniewski played a key role in Ukraine's Orange Revolution. Zajackowski conveyed that, despite efforts to reduce tensions with Russia, Poland would not yield on democracy. With regard to Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, he commented, "We (and the Russians) will come down on different sides." There are numerous examples of Poland's ongoing commitment to the post-Soviet space. Poland hosted in November a donor's conference for Belarusian Satellite Television (BELSAT), which transmits uncensored Belarusian language broadcasts into Belarus. On

WARSAW 00002395 003 OF 003

December 6, President Kaczynski and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko signed an agreement on "Common Challenges - New Dimensions of Strategic Partnership," after which Kaczynski said the Ukrainian people would have to make their own choices but, "We are convinced that Ukraine will become a NATO and EU member." Poland has also consistently supported the democratic process in Georgia, most recently dispatching Adam Michnik, Solidarity icon and founder/editor-in-chief of Poland's influential daily Gazeta Wyborcza, to Tbilisi as a media freedom ombudsman in the run-up to Georgia's January 5 presidential elections. Michnik's EU-backed efforts resulted in a December 3 agreement allowing independent television station "Imedi" to resume broadcasts in Georgia.

111. (C) Concerns over energy security will also remain a source of friction in Polish-Russian relations, even as efforts to reconcile move forward. During their December 6 meeting, Kaczynski and Yushchenko discussed extending the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline from the Ukraine into Poland. While visiting Berlin, PM Tusk discussed with German Chancellor Merkel the GOP's concerns regarding the proposed "Nordstream" Baltic Sea gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, which would bypass Poland. Warsaw worries that Nordstream would provide the Russian government with a new way to supply

gas to Western Europe, increasing Russia's ability to disrupt Polish energy supplies without impacting Germany badly. The Tusk government is promoting renewed discussion of the alternative land-based "Amber Route," that would pass through Poland and the Baltic States to Germany.

Poland is Ready for Realpolitik "light"

¶12. (C) COMMENT: The style and tone of Poland's new government vis-a-vis Russia has shifted significantly and seems to be paying off. Despite some public wrangling, there is no sign of a real substantive split between the President and the PM over policy. In a very practical way, Poland seems poised to return every favor offered by Russia. However, given Poland's role as a champion of democracy and its need for energy security, this reciprocity has limits. For now, though, there exists ample room for the more dynamic and open relationship that Prime Minister Tusk has invited.
END COMMENT.
HILLAS